

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 004768

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SUBJECT: IRAQI PM ALLAWI'S VISIT WITH THE EU: EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONFIRMS PACKAGE OF ASSISTANCE FOR IRAQ

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Classified By: Rick Holtzapple, PolOff, Reasons 1.4 B/D

¶1. (C) According to a Council source who attended the November 5 luncheon between the EU Heads of State and Government (the European Council) and Iraqi PM Allawi, the lunch went quite well, despite some hiccups over comments made by Allawi to the press the previous day calling some European countries "spectators." Nothing unexpected was said at the lunch, and no new decisions were made. The European Council earlier in the day had confirmed without change the EU's package of assistance for Iraq approved by EUFMs on Nov. 2 (REFTEL). The general tenor of the discussion around the table was that, while the EU had been clearly divided over Iraq in the past, and continued to have differing opinions about military involvement there, they all had an interest in Iraq's stability, and were willing to make a contribution. (NOTE: President Chirac was the only major EU leader not in attendance, but told the press before he left Brussels prior to the lunch that he had "never refused" to meet Allawi, had seen him at the G8 Summit in June. Chirac did comment that Allawi "sometimes says things that are more or less appreciated", but Chirac would see Allawi again "with pleasure." END NOTE.) According to our contact, French FM Barnier, who attended the lunch for France, spoke up repeatedly to note to Allawi that France is not just a spectator in Iraq, but is an actor that is engaged in trying to promote Iraq's stability.

¶2. (U) In a subsequent press conference, Allawi stressed that Iraq had received "unanimous support" from the EU for its stabilization and reconstruction, and that the purpose of his visit to Brussels, to both the EU and NATO, had been to "plug Iraq back into the international community." He denied he had ever called the Europeans "spectators", noting that European states had hosted Iraqi dissidents during Saddam's era. Asked about the situation in Falluja, Allawi said the IIG was determined to "liberate the people there from the terrorists and insurgents" but that "the window is closing for a peaceful settlement" and if none can be found, "we will have to bring the insurgents to justice."

¶3. (U) Asked about the recent announcements by EU members such as Hungary and the Netherlands that they would withdraw their troops in 2005, Allawi responded that he respected every country's right to make its own decisions about its troops. But, he added, Iraq continues to face big security challenges and an early decrease in the international presence would increase the risks Iraq faces. Iraq would continue to need help from international forces until Iraqi forces are capable of dealing with the threats by themselves.

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